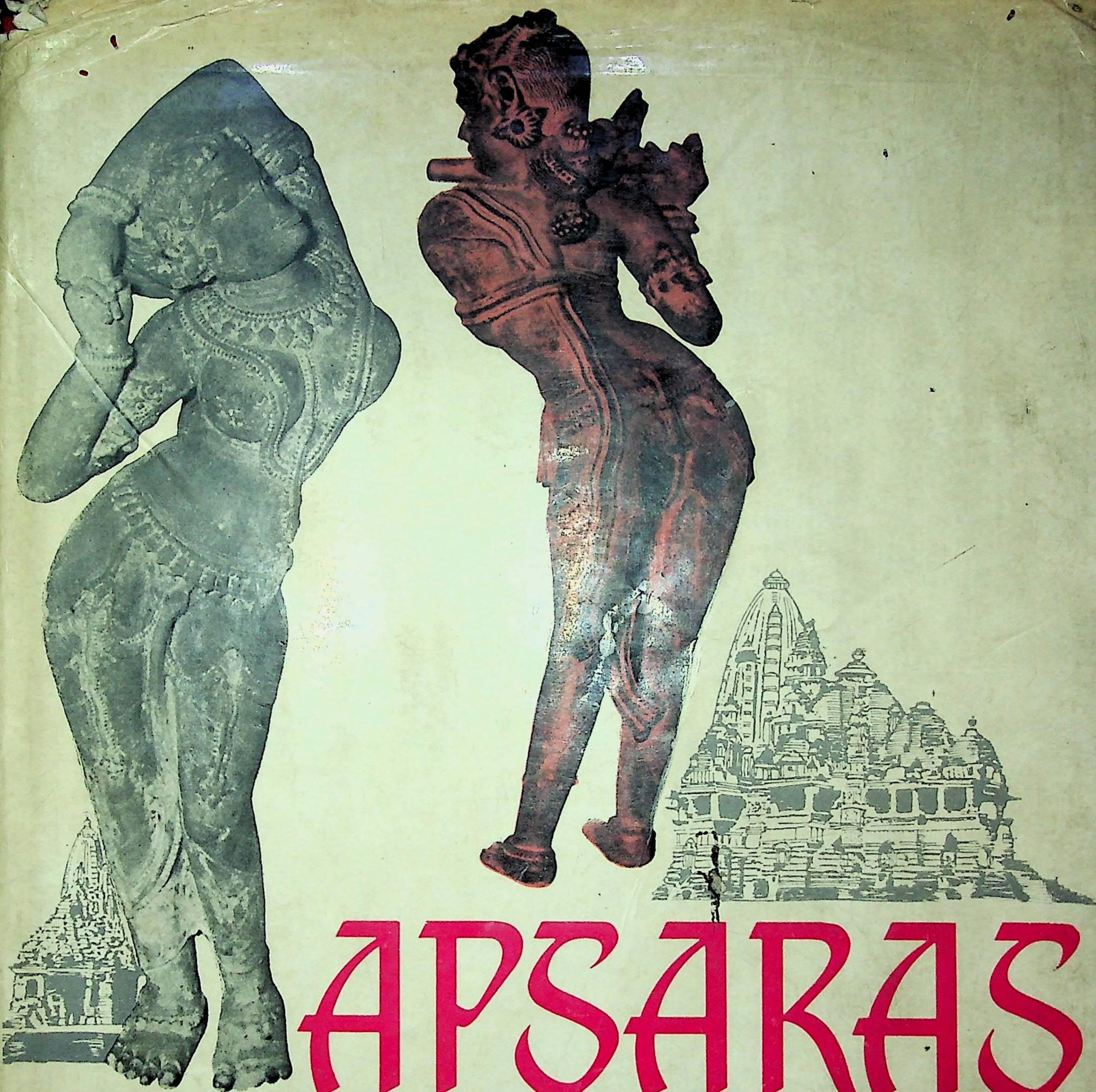


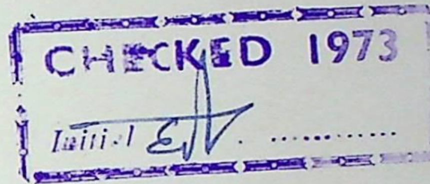
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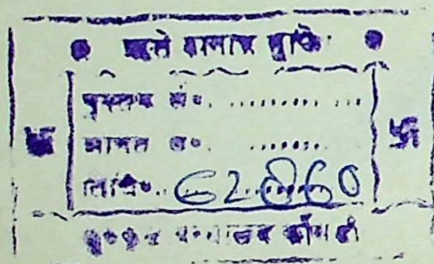
KANWAR LAL

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PREFACE

Apsaras are celestial females, and celebrated in Indian mythology as the nymphs of Indr's heaven. Their origin is attributed to the churning of the Sea of Milk for obtaining *amrit* when among many other priceless things which came out of the ocean, the Apsaras, 'troop of celestial nymphs, matchless in grace, perfect in loveliness' were produced. And since they had arisen out of water, therefore, their name, *apsaras*. As Wilson renders it in his translation of the Ramayan :

Then from the agitated deep up sprung
The legion of Apsarases, so named
That to the watery element they owed
Their being. Myriads were they born, and all
In vesture heavenly clad, and heavenly gems ;
With all the gifts of grace, of youth and beauty.

Apsaras have often appeared in myths and legends to fascinate heroes, or to tempt great sages and by making them turn from their penance keep their master, Indr, from losing his throne.

Derivatively, the word *apsara,* stands, like the word, *nymph,* in English language, for any ravishingly beautiful and voluptuous female who has the 'gifts of grace, of youth and beauty' ; and for the purposes of this book, the term has been used in this general sense, of the alluring damsel.

Much of the material—text as well as blocks—for this book has been taken from 'Immortal Khajuraho'. A number of persons who were not interested in the historical and architectural data and detail, or who did not want to purchase the complete but rather bulky and costly work on Khajuraho, expressed a desire for a separate and comparatively low-priced study of Khajuraho's female beauties. It is hoped that this volume will meet that requirement as well as provide an interesting peep into the world of Beauty which is Khajuraho, and of which the *apsaras* reproduced here constitute but a part, albeit such a significant part.

Delhi,
31st May, 1966

KANWAR LAL

1

THE celebrated temples of Khajuraho belong to that phase of Indian architecture in which sculpture ceases to be a superimposed decoration and becomes, instead, an integrated part of an organic whole. Indeed, it is obvious that here sculpture is architecture : the entire temple is a single piece of stupendous carving. But whether they are one art or two separate skills, they help create a world of Beauty in which, as in the world around us, She takes a myriad forms. There are gods and goddesses and other celestial beings like the *gandharvs* and the *apsaras,* and men and women, animals, trees and flowers. All these and more are arranged in intricate but meaningful patterns, so that, like the architectural form, the sculptural scheme presents a replica of the universe.

Now, in this lovely little universe created by the artists of Khajuraho, beautiful females claim a prominent place. In fact, one might even say that the world of Khajuraho is, above all, the world of female beauty. As we have remarked above there are denizens of various worlds, gods and men, the *yakshs, gandharvs* and *gans ; nags* and animals ; and all the floral and vegetable representations in one temple or another. But, more than all these, what the Khajuraho monuments seem determined to present is the woman beautiful in all her charm and allurement. Innumerable carvings of young and seductive damsels, mortal and celestial, adorn the walls of the temples. It is not always easy to distinguish between the heavenly members of the species and the earthly, but the divine beauties are generally content to vaunt their voluptuous loveliness. The others, the terrestrial, "are generally represented in the secular occupations of various kinds of toilette : some twisting their braid, some coloring their feet with lac dye, some putting on the *tilaka* according to the reflection in the mirror held in the hand, some handling the powder box, others standing in merely absorbing poses, revealing various moods of love." Critic after critic is struck by the beauty and voluptuousness with which these figures are informed. "Besides the images of gods and goddesses", says Mitra, "there are plenty of three-dimensional representations of youthful damsels,—*nayikas,* and *apsaras* and *surasundaris* brilliantly illuminating the temple walls." Of these figures of living beauty each one "expresses a particular mood of mind or an action." In one particular temple, the Vaman, "we look", remarks Benjamin Rowland, "upon a double tier of naked apsaras in a celestial chorus, vaunting their voluptuous charms in an infinite variety of attitudes displaying a 'languid and calculated eroticism', rendered the more provocative by the contrasts between the slim bodies and the towering complication of the head-dresses.

These dancers in the heaven of Indra are, according to legend, creatures not made of gross flesh but constituted rather of the air and the movements that compose their heavenly dances; they are here as appropriate 'entertainers' in the reconstructed heaven that is the fabric of the sanctury." K.M. Munshi notes, in passing, some of the moods of the "eternal woman" portrayed in stone: "The reminiscent mood is expressed in one sculpture. Another expresses the indolent mood; a third shows anxiety to get ready; a fourth keenness to adorn herself, and a fifth anxiety to do so. Still another figure describes tense attention in removing a thorn from the foot. The woman with the mirror is lost in self-admiration. Her complacent smile and the intently adoring eyes fixed on her reflection show her the eternal woman as she stands before a mirror." And there are many more who go into raptures over the carven wealth of womanly loveliness so richly displayed at Khajuraho. Since the *apsaras* are deep-born and heaven-dwelling, the problem of the sculptor was to carve, out of coarse stone, bodies constituted not of flesh but rather of air "rich with all the gifts of grace, of youth and beauty". The loveliness of the *apsaras* had to have an ethereal quality which would be the envy and despair of their mortal rivals. Or what else is art for?

But the artists were human, and so they made the earthly females in no way less lovely than these "daughters of pleasure", women of the gods, the *surasundaris*. This was the least they owed to the women of earth who had given them such exquisite dreams. Result: We may marvel over figure after figure of enticing beauty, subtle and delicate and voluptuous, and carved to perfection as to mood and technique. And not one but many a chiselled piece will deserve what Dushyant said when he saw Shakuntala:

"She is God's vision, of pure thought
Composed in His creative mind;
His reveries of beauty wrought
The peerless pearl of mankind."

Again, since Shakuntala was the daughter of an *apsara*, all beauty is inter-related; and so, all these females of Khajuraho are but different spangles throbbing with the same lustre.

2

Of course, the phenomenon of the representation of beautiful females, whether human or divine, is far from being a unique feature of the temples of Khajuraho. On the contrary, woman is one of the commonest motifs of Indian temple-sculpture, as it is of art, sculpture, painting or poetry anywhere in the world. Only, the Chandel artists seem to have decided to portray woman in all her wealth of beauty

and attractiveness as if there were some hidden challenge to outdo a rival. One wonders if this was Ajanta, where the masters had used "woman as their best decorative asset with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge. Woman is the finest achievement of their art and obviously the most admired theme. They use woman like flowers, garlands of girls surround their Rajas and their Princes, embellish their palaces, dominate their street scenes, crowd the windows of their cities, and are often painted...for the sheer joy of painting them, and with no perceivable literary or religious intention. As Apsaras or radiant Peris they float across the porches ; as sirens they lure the sailor to his doom ; but chiefly they shine for us as mortals, and as mortals these artists depicted them best and most often. They painted them at the toilette, in repose, gossiping, sitting, standing, always with a wonder akin to awe. They did not pose women ; they simply copied their poses." Were the masters at Khajuraho doing the same, in their own way : portraying these women of beauty and the beauty of women for the sheer joy of portraying them ? It was customary to endow temples with a band not only of priests but also of *devdasis,* maids of the gods on earth, like the *apsaras* are in heaven. Perhaps, the Khajuraho temples had their own beauties who could pose for the artists, be living models for all the loveliness that is carved upon the walls. In his fine monograph on Khajuraho, Mulk Raj Anand remarks on this matter thus : "Conjecture, myth and speculation, will always, in the absence of historical documentation, weave ever new webs to explain the miraculous appearance, all in a hundred years, of a belief in the life force so potent as is reflected on the walls, as also the presence of so many lovely women, transformed into *Surasundaris,* by the sensitive chisels of the craftsmen. Some say that the most beautiful women were brought from Magadha, Malwa and Rajputana to be trained as *devadasis* in the Khajuraho temples. And it is alleged further that as these devadasis were lovely women, dedicated to the ceremonies of the Gods, there is no evidence of children on the walls. 'So much love, so many lovely flowers but no fruit !' Other people say that the Gods and *Surasundaris* who cover the interiors and the exteriors of the temples, were taken from real life and put there against the stylised Gods and Goddesses of the high reaches."

Not that it was necessary to have living models, *devdasis* from Magadha, Malwa and Rajputana, or even local women, to draw upon. The concepts and ideals of female beauty, *apsara* or *nayika,* goddess or woman, were set conventions by the time the Candel artists were called upon to handle the theme. Literature was full of minutely drawn portraits of beautiful females. Every detail, of limb and dress, of natural contours and artistic ornament, was delineated in terms as perfect as they were clear. The myth of the creation of woman was itself full of the beautiful : "In the beginning, when Twashtri (the Divine Artificer) came to the creation of woman he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows :—He took the rotundity of the moon and the curves of creepers, and the

clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk, and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds, and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of the hare, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of jays, and the cooing of *kokila*, and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the *chakrawaka*; and, compounding all these together, he made woman, and gave her to man."

Ignoring for the moment the "contrariness" which has obviously gone into the making of woman's being and nature, let us note how the sweet and lovely elements have been crowded with such abundance into this delight and torment, this saviour and snare of man. All beauty is naturally attractive to man; woman combining both beauty and the power of sex has always been doubly so. "Beauty is but the splendour of God and divine light extended to all created objects, but the divine reflection has chosen to shine with the greatest brilliance in woman's body," says Agrippa in his *Excellence of Woman*. The dictum was accepted with zest by the Hindu poet and artist who lavished all their imagination and skill on the creation, in word, colour or stone, of this gem of creation.

3

Before we look at what man's fancy created in the realm of art, let us take note of the contradictory elements in the composition of the female referred to above. Like the rest of mankind, the Indian had lost little time in finding out that woman was all a man's good and all his woe, too. He knew as well as the Persian poet that in fashioning her the Creator "took a rose, a lily, a dove, a serpent, a little honey, a dead-sea apple, and a handful of clay", and the amalgam became woman. That she was a dish for the gods as well as the devil's ally, was nectar and poison, sweet and bitter, all at once, was well known. As on all other matters, the early Hindu philosophers had lavished much thought on this also, and since the subject was that great bundle of contradictions, woman, the result has been a jumble which could yield whatever view one wanted to extract from that miscellany. In his study of sexual life in ancient India, Meyer comments: "In the soul of the Indian there dwells that twin pair, burning sensuality and stark renunciation of the world and the flesh. What a delight and torment then must woman be to him! And since he is wont to express his impressions and views with great violence, has no fear of any deduction and drives everything to its utmost end, we might put together a

more than gigantic folio on woman from Indian literature, whose various parts would only have this in common : their contradiction of one another." This, of course, is equally true of any literature anywhere, on this subject; yet, somehow, in Hindu thought the conflict appeared to have started early and was not resolved for quite some time, and even then not for all time, as it still obtains, basically, in the Hindu view of life. However that be, it is from very early times in Indian history that evidence of woman's dual role in man's life might be traced. Indeed, her greatness was more than allowed—she was man's half, spiritually, too, for no sacrifice, *yagya,* was complete without her ; and where women were honoured, the gods came to live. The chaste wife was a highly idealised figure. And Sita and Savitri, and Gandhari and Draupadi, Damayanti and Shakuntala were specimens of the species who do credit to the highest concept ever, and anywhere, of womankind. Of them, indeed, one might say that they bear out the views that "Nature meant woman to be her masterpiece," that "next to God we are indebted to woman, first for life itself, and then for making it worth living", that woman "may have got us out of Eden, but as a compensation she makes the earth very pleasant". Recognising the enjoyment of married bliss as an essential element of life, and the begetting of sons as a religious obligation, Hindu thought sanctioned for woman due and honourable place in the social set-up. On comparatively easier ground, the charm of her youth and beauty was freely acknowledged, the delight of sexual union with her fully accepted. Thus the sight of lovely damsels was regarded as auspicious,—nay, to see women, any woman, was considered as generally lucky—and the pleasures of love were often exalted and equated to the highest spiritual bliss. Bhartari Hari was to put it in his verse later ; but this always held good: "What use is there in talking a great deal of nonsense and incoherent prattle ? There are only two things worth the devotion of man in this world : either the youth of beautiful women who are ever eager to taste sensual enjoyments, annoyed as it were, with the burden of their full-developed breasts, or the forest (hermit's life)". Or, again, "you should either go to the Ganga and take your abode on her pious banks quite capable of purifying your soul of all previous sins, or you should devote yourself to the charming breasts of young women adorned with beautiful necklaces." Again and again, and yet again, is this sentiment voiced in ancient verse and prose, in religious literature and secular, and woven inextricably into the texture of the Indian mind through precept and practice, through the arts and the laws. Whether philosophy and religion were pressed into service for justification of what was plain and simple hedonism ; or whether the surprising development of a simple cult of pleasure into a subtle creed of purity, of the worship of the sensual into a system of virtue, was high truth and deep realisation,—this is an intricate matter. But it is obvious that the germ of the philosophy of delight as well as of woman as Shakti was latent in the male consciousness and only awaiting ripeness and fruition. Woman-born,

and woman-bewitched, man, has always been doomed and destined to worship this divinity on Earth ! Or why should the gods have made woman at all ?

To revert, while a fortunate Krishn sported with thousands of women, there were saints and sages and recluses who, having renounced the pleasures of life, would take to penance unparalleled and austerities untold. And always they had but two fears, of their sacrifices being disturbed and defiled by evil spirits, and of their vow of celibacy being undone by a woman. Thus arose and developed the concept of woman as snare, as illusion, as a drag, as an enemy, as an obstacle in man's reaching out to perfection and salvation! Knowing that she was the greatest weakness of man, the gods kept a bevy of the most captivating females to hinder the aggregation through austerities of spiritual power by whoever seemed to be threatening them most. So a Menaka would be sent to a sage like Vishvamitr or Rambha and Tillottama to seduce the *asur* brothers, Shumbh and Nishumbh. For other predicaments too, the solution would be found in the exercise of this most potent of charms. For instance, when the gods were hard pressed by the demoness Tarka, Parvati was made use of so that she and Shiv might beget a son who would deal with their tormentress. Indeed, at one crucial stage in the eternal conflict between the gods and the demons, Vishnu had taken on the form of Mohini, the enchantress, to bewitch and beguile the truce-bound foes. The scene is the end of the great churning of the ocean, which was now yielding not only the prime prize, nectar, but many other priceless items including those

"Delicious girls of heaven whose beauties ease
The labour of the battle-weary gods."

those daughters of pleasure, the joys of dance and song, the *apsaras* themselves.

And how did the great Vishnu bewilder the demons ? By assuming the form of the beautiful, bewitching Mohini. "As soon as Dhanwantari appeared with the bowl of ambrosia, the gods and the Asuras left the churning rope and madly rushed toward the physician. In the scuffle, the Asuras succeeded in seizing the bowl, and they made away with it. But a quarrel broke out among the Asuras themselves on the question as to who should be served first. Then appeared in their midst a damsel of celestial beauty, with her face like a lotus in bloom, heaving breasts, waist like an island, and her person adorned with necklaces, bangles and anklets. She stepped merrily into the midst of the Asuras, her anklets jingling and smiled on them. The Asuras now forgot all about ambrosia and stood wondering at the beauty of Mohini...and a gallant Asura suggested that she should decide how to share ambrosia, and all the Asuras cheered him. Mohini smiled and asked them whether it would be prudent to leave such a momentous decision to a woman. 'Wise men have said', said Mohini with a mischievous smile, 'that women are unreliable'. All the Asuras laughed heartily and were now convinced without any doubt that she could be trusted and swore that they would abide by her decision unconditiona-

lly. Mohini then remarked that the gods and the Asuras had toiled equally hard in raising ambrosia and should get an equal share, and made them sit in two rows. She took the bowl and served the row of gods first. After the last god had been served, Mohini disappeared with the bowl !."

Such, then, was the sweet-terrific aspect of the female, such the deadly lure of her loveliness. She was the eternal siren, singing men to their doom, deluding them as *maya*, symbolising the sensual *par excellence,* and exercising a fatal fascination which would keep the mortals bound to the material. It was as this, as sweet-enchantress, as a snare, as an instrument of infatuation, as the link and the tie of wordly attachment that woman had been thought of through the ages. Nevertheless, the world had jogged along normally until that happened which made for a new chapter in the story of woman as in that of many another matter.

4

Two thousand and five hundred years ago, a man of exquisite sensibility and exceptional sensitiveness had a series of mental experiences which brought about first a great revolution and, then, a great counter-revolution in the ways and views of those who followed. This fine and fragrant being, whom the world knows as the Buddh, was a prince of the Shakya clan and had been brought up in luxury and seclusion by his father, Shuddhodan, who had been forewarned that Siddharth, as the Prince was named, would renounce the world. Knowing little psychology, obviously, the fond father kept from the youth all knowledge of the seamy side of life. Light and joy and love and pleasure—these alone the Prince knew until his marriage and the birth of a son. Then, driving out one day through the streets of their capital, Kapilvastu, which had been carefully cleared by his father's order of whatever might jar upon Siddharth's sight and mind, the future Buddh saw that which put an end to the dream-life he had been living. Strange questionings arose in his mind, and he felt a great urge to get away from his home, to lead a hermit's life, and to find out the truth of things. Not before long this urge became irresistible, and one night the prince slipped away under cover of darkness to accomplish the purpose of his birth and to fulfil his destiny—to become the Buddh, the Wise One and the Saviour, who would save all things.

Of the eight soothsayers who had been called to foretell the future of Siddharth, he who had predicted that the prince would become the Buddh had indicated that four sights—an old man, a sick man, a dead body and a hermit—would make the prince forsake the worldly life. The king had tried his best to prevent that from happening and steps had been taken to keep the old and the

sick and the dead and the saintly out of his way. But who can prevent the destined from happening ?

According to one account, the Prince drove out on four occasions and each time he saw one of the four 'signs' which would signal his renunciation. Seeing an old man, the Prince had questioned his charioteer and learnt that "youth must yield to age in every living being."

On a second visit they met a sick man. On learning what this spectacle meant the Prince exclaimed, "If health be frail as the substance of a dream, who then can take delight in joy and pleasure ?"

When the Prince went forth the third time, he saw a corpse followed by weeping mourners. And he learnt how for all who are born the end is death.

When they drove forth for the last time, they met a hermit. " 'Who is this man of so calm a temper ?' said the Prince, 'clothed in russet garments, and of such dignified demeanour'. 'Sire', said the charioteer, 'he is a Bhikkhu, a religious, who has abandoned all longings and leads a life of austerity; he lives without passion or envy, and begs his daily food.' The Prince answered : 'That is well done, and makes me eager for the same course of life: to become religious has ever been praised by the wise, and this shall be my, refuge and the refuge of others and shall yield the fruit of life, and immortality.' "

He was now resolved to leave his home, and he sought his father's permission to do so. " 'Sire', said he, 'the time is at hand for my going forth, do not hinder me, but permit me to depart.' The king's eyes were charged with tears, and he answered : 'What is there needful to change thy purpose ? Tell me whatever thou desirest and it shall be thine, be it myself, the palace, or the kingdom.' " The Prince replied, " 'Sire, I desire four things, pray thee grant them : the first, to remain for ever in possession of the fresh colour of youth ; the second, that sickness may never attack me ; the third, that my life may have no term ; the last, that I may not be subject to decay.' When the king heard these words, he was overcome by grief, for the prince desired what it was not possible for a man to bestow. " Then the Prince continued : " 'If then I cannot avoid old age, sickness, death and decay, grant at least this one thing, that when I leave this world I may nevermore be subject to rebirth.' " The distressed and bewildered father knew not what answer to give and what other measures to take to stop the Prince from carrying out his resolve. Any way, one of the measures he took was to provide more pleasure: "That night the singers and the dancing-girls exerted themselves to please the prince : fair as the nymphs of heaven, they danced and sang and played. But the Bodhisatta, his heart being estranged from sin, took no pleasure in the entertainment, and fell asleep. And the women seeing that he slept, laid aside their instruments and fell asleep likewise. And when the lamps that were fed with scented oil were on the point of dying, the Bodhisatta awoke, and he saw the girls that had seemed so fair, in all the disarray of slumber. And the king's son, seeing them thus dishevelled and dis-arrayed, breathing heavily, yawning and

sprawling in unseemly attitudes, was moved to scorn. 'Such is the true nature of women,' he thought, 'but a man is deceived by dress and jewels and is deluded by a woman's beauties. If a man would but consider the natural state of women and the change that comes upon them in sleep, assuredly he would not cherish his folly; but he is smitten from a right will, and so succumbs to passion.' And therewith he resolved to accomplish the Great Renunciation that very night, and at that very time, for it seemed to him that every mode of existence on earth or in heaven most resembled a delay in a house already become the prey of devouring flames."

It was to break, for ever, this house of existence that Siddharth left home and wandered about for six long years before he saw the Light and gained Wisdom. In his search for a solution to the riddle of existence, he tried several modes of asceticism and experienced many real and legendary obstacles in the way. Of the latter, mention may be made of a final attempt by Mar, the Tempter, to turn the future Buddh's mind away from his goal. As Siddharth sat under a tree, the Fiend "summoned his three daughters, Tanha, Rati, and Raga, and they danced before the Bodhisatta like the swaying branches of a young leafy tree, using all the arts of seduction known to beautiful women. Again they offered him the lordship of the earth, and the companionship of beautiful girls; they appealed to him with songs of the season of spring, and exhibited their supernatural beauty and grace. But the Bodhisatta's heart was not in the least moved, and he answered:

"*Pleasure is brief as a flash of lightning*
Or like an Autumn shower, only for a moment...
Why should I then covet the pleasures you speak of?
I see your bodies are full of all impurity:
Birth and death, sickness and age are yours.
I seek the highest prize, hard to attain by men—
The true and constant wisdom of the wise."

This was the hour of complete victory and Enlightenment followed. Then, having become the Buddh—

...he arose—radiant, rejoicing, strong—
Beneath the Tree, and lifting high his voice
Spake thus, in hearing of all Times and Worlds:
Many a house of life
Hath held me—seeking ever him who wrought
These prisons of the senses, sorrow fraught;
Sore was my ceaseless strife.

But now

Thou Builder of this tabernacle—Thou!
I know Thee! Never shall Thou build again
These walls of Pain,
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits; nor lay

Fresh rafters on the clay ;
Broken Thy house is, and the ridge-pole split !
Delusion fashioned it !
Safe pass I them—deliverance to obtain."

And he set forth to let others partake of his wisdom and, by following his way, to obtain their own deliverance.

In his very first sermon, as in the song of truimph at the time of his Enlightenment, the Buddh indicated how his mind had been working. The House of Life was built of the 'Walls of Pain', and our goal was to pull down the 'roof-tree of deceits' and to split the 'Delusion-fashioned ridge-pole'. In the sermon which set the Wheel of Law in motion, he said :

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to suffering. Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving unsatisfied, that, too, is painful. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging (that is, the conditions of individuality) are painful.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. Verily ! it is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings, that is accompanied by sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here now there—that is to say, the craving for the gratification of the senses, or the craving for prosperity.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the passing away of pain. Verily ! it is the passing away so that no passion remains, the giving up, the getting rid of, the emancipation from, the harbouring no longer of this craving thirst.

"Now this is the Noble Truth as to the way that leads to the passing away of pain. Verily ! it is this Aryan Eightfold Path, that is to say, Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, conduct, and mode of livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Rapture."

Life was Pain, then, and craving was at the bottom of it all. Man must conquer craving and so govern himself that no passion remains, or, else, the cycle of birth and death and rebirth, will never cease. Our senses were our enemies, and our hearts and minds were always on fire with the fire of desire and lust. All these made us seek satisfaction in things and forms which were transitory, which were an illusion. Youth and Beauty, Form and Body, Spring and Flowers—all these decay, are constantly moving towards death. These fugitive pleasures are not worth pursuing; but men are not wise, and, therefore, foolishly run after these gilded butterflies. Pleasure is brief, and Youth and Beauty are on their way to Age and Deformity. We have seen part of this philosophy summed up in the Buddh's reaction to the sights he saw, and in his attitude towards the dancing girls and the daughters of Mar. The following story fully illustrates this aspect of his view of the matter :

When the Buddha was residing in the Jetavan Vihar at Sravasti, there were four newly-admitted mendicants who went together and sat under a plum-tree,

intending to engage themselves in religious contemplation (*dhyan*). At this time the tree was in full bloom, and struck by the beautiful colours and the fragrant perfume of the blossoms, the conversation of the mendicants took the following turn—viz., as to what in all the world was most worthy of love as a source of pleasure. Then one of them said, "I think the greatest happiness in the world is during some moonlight night in spring, when all the trees are in bloom, to wander forth in the country, and take one's pleasure without constraint." Another said, "I think the highest pleasure is in joining in some family social gathering, and enjoying the feast and the wine, the music and the dancing." Another said, "I think the highest happiness is to possess such funds of wealth as to enable one to procure whatever the heart desires, whether it be chariots or horses, clothing or ornaments, such as would make one, on going into the world, the admiration and envy of all beholders." The fourth said, "And I think the highest happiness to be to possess a wife as beautiful as possible, and to see her clad in all the choicest robes, anointed with the rarest unguents, and always ready for the indulgence of love." Now the Buddh, perceiving that these men were capable of conversion, but had not yet arrived at a knowledge of the impermanency of the six objects of desire, immediately, with a sigh, addressed the four men, and asked them, "What is the subject of your discourse, as you sit here together beneath this tree ?" On this they told him truthfully what each one's idea of happiness was. And then the Buddh rejoined, "Let there be an end of such discourse, for all these things (which you desire) are the causes of (way of) sorrow, misfortune, fear, and calamity. This is not the way of eternal peace, the system of the highest joy. The flowers of spring shall fade in autumn, and fall in utter decay before the winter cold. All those friends in whose society you place such reliance for happiness, ere long shall be scattered and separated far and wide. That wealth you prize, and that beauty of wife, and those pleasures, alas ! are the causes of every misfortune—hatred in families, wreck of body, future misery ! Wherefore, O Bhikshus ! be sure that the highest bliss is to search after supreme wisdom, to covet a condition of non-attachment, to desire nought for one's self, to aim at Nirvana." And then the Buddh uttered the following verse :

> "From lust comes sorrow, from lust comes fear; where there is no lust, or no ground for lust, what sorrow, what fear can there be ? From pleasure comes sorrow, from pleasure comes fear; where there is no ground for pleasure, what grief or fear can there be ? From covetousness (greed) comes sorrow, from greed comes fear; where one is free from covetousness, there can be no sorrow or fear. But to be greedy to fulfil perfectly the requirements (moral rules) of the Law—to be truthful in everything, or to be perfectly truthful, to be modest in everything, to conduct his own business (to order himself) according to what is right—this is to lay a foundation of love for all. The idea of pleasure not yet produced, his thoughts and words

composed, his mind unaffected by any bewilderment of love, he indeed shall mount above or cut off the Stream."

'From Lust comes Sorrow'—this became the corner-stone of the Buddhist thought. And since Lust was dependent for its existence as well as satisfaction on the senses, and since the senses were housed in the body, therefore, the body was a vile thing. This moving house, our body, was all delusion, and even when its exterior looked fair and tempting, within it was all filthy and disgusting :

"Whilst knit by bones and sinews, plaster'd o'er
by flesh and tissues, and encased in skin,
the body does not pass for what it is.
Within, 'tis stuffed with entrails, liver, paunch,
with heart and bladder, kidneys, lungs, and spleen ;
'tis stuffed with spittle, snot, and sweat, and blood,
joints' lubricating humours, bile, and fat ;
and evermore from its nine apertures
nine several excretions issue forth,
as eyes and ears, with nostrils, mouth, and skin,
exude abroad their foul discharge of filth,
and brains fill up the hollow cranium.
—'A fine thing this !' say fools, by error led."

Since for the Buddh, for the male, the female body was the arch attraction, woman had to be guarded against. She was the real snare. She was the embodiment of Desire, and, therefore, the most deadly weapon of the Enemy ; nay, she was the enemy. Commenting on this, Ananda Coomaraswamy says :

"We must understand that the early Buddhist want of sympathy with woman is not a unique phenomenon, but rather one that is typical of monastic sentiment all the world over. It is based on fear. For of all the snares of the senses which Ignorance sets before the unwary, the most insidious, the most dangerous, the most attractive, is woman."—and quotes the Master :

"Master," says Ananda, "how shall we behave before women ?"—"You should shun their gaze, Ananda."—"But if we see them, master, what then are we to do ?"—"Not speak to them, Ananda."—"But if we do speak to them, what then ?"—"Then you must watch over yourself, Ananda."

Indeed, the Buddh did not think much of women :

"Women are soon angered, Ananda ; women are full of passion, Ananda ; women are envious, Ananda ; women are stupid, Ananda. That is the reason, Ananda, that the cause, why women have no place in public assemblies, do not carry on a business, and do not earn their living by any profession."

He would not admit them to the Order, and even when he did, he did it with forebodings :

"If, Ananda, women had not retired from household life to the houseless

one, under the doctrine and discipline announced by the Tathagata, religion, Ananda, would long endure ; a thousand years would the good doctrine abide. But since, Ananda, women have now retired from the household life to the houseless one, under the doctrine and discipline announced by the Tathagata, not long, Ananda, will religion endure ; but five hundred years, Ananda, will the good doctrine abide."

Thus we see that Desire, the root of life's sorrow, fed on the senses, which for the male, found their maximum attraction and illusory delight in the female form, and especially the beautiful and youthful woman. Beauty, Body and Woman—these, therefore, became symbols of evil and snares for fools. The attitude of the early Buddhists may be seen in the following little piece from Vishuddhi Marg :

"Reverend Sir, have you seen a woman pass this way ? And the elder said :

"Was it a woman, or a man
That passed this way ? I cannot tell.
But this I know, a set of bones
Is travelling upon this road."

And the story of 'The Nun and the Phantom', one of the countless legends connected with the Buddha, illustrates this fully :

One day Janapada-Kalyani thought to herself, "My eldest brother has renounced the glory of dominion, has become a monk, and has now become the foremost being in the world, even the Buddha ; his son, Rahula Kumara, has become a monk ; my husband has become a monk ; so also has my mother become a nun. Seeing that all kinsfolk of mine have adopted the religious life, why should I continue any longer to live the house-life ? I too will become a nun."

Accordingly she went to the community of nuns and became a nun, not at all because of faith, but solely because of love for her kinsfolk. Because of her wonderous beauty, she become known as Rupa-Nanda.

One day she heard that the Teacher had said, "Beauty of form is impermanent, involved in suffering, unreal ; so likewise are sensation, percepation, the aggregate of mental states, consciousness, impermanent, involved in suffering, unreal." Thereupon she said to herself, "In that case he would find fault even with my own form, so beautiful to took upon and so fair to see." Therefore she avoided meeting the Teacher face to face. But listening to the nuns and the female lay disciples as they recited the praises of the Tathagata, Rupananda said to herself, "In extravagant terms do they tell the praises of my brother. Suppose he were to find fault with my beauty of form during one single day. How much could he say in that length of time ? Suppose I were to go with the nuns, and without letting myself be seen, look upon the Tathagata, hear him preach the Law, and then return ?" So she said to the nuns, "To-day I too will go and hear the Law."

From the moment Rupananda started out, she kept thinking to herself, "I

will not let him see who I am." The Teacher thought to himself "To-day Rupananda will come to pay her respects to me ; what manner of lesson will do her the most good ?" As he considered the matter further, he came to the following conclusion, "This woman thinks a great deal of her beauty of form and is deeply attached to her own person. It will therefore be of advantage to her if I crush out the pride she feels in her beauty of form, by beauty of form itself, even as one draws out one thorn with another thorn." Accordingly, when it was time for her to enter the monastery, the Teacher put forth his supernatural power and created a young woman about sixteen years of age. Surpassing beauty did she possess ; she wore crimson garments ; she was adorned with all her ornaments, and stood before the Teacher with fan in hand, swinging the fan back and forth.

Now both the Teacher and Rupananda beheld this woman. As Rupananda entered the monastery with the nuns, she took her place behind the nuns, saluted the Teacher and sat down among the nuns. Then she saw the phantom of a woman standing near the Teacher and surveyed her face, glorious as the full moon. Having surveyed this woman, she surveyed her own person and compared herself to a crow standing before a royal goose of golden hue. For from the moment she looked upon this phantom, created by supernatural power, her eyes rolled back and forth. "Oh, how beautiful is her hair ! Oh, how beautiful is her forehead !" she exclaimed. She was fascinated by the glorious beauty of every part of her body, and she became possessed with intense desire for equal beauty herself. The Teacher observing that she was fascinated by the beauty of the woman, proceeded to teach her Law.

First he transformed the woman from a maiden about sixteen years of age to a woman about twenty years of age. Rupananda surveyed her form again, was quickly filled with a feeling of disappointment, and said to herself, "This form is by no means the same as it was before." Gradually the Teacher transformed her, first into a woman who had given birth to one child, then to a woman of middle life, finally into a decrepit old woman. Rupananda watched every stage of the transformation, saying to herself, "Now this has disappeared, now that has disappeared." When, however, she saw her transformed into a decrepit old woman, and surveyed her standing there, teeth broken, hair gray, body bent, crooked as a ∧ shaped rafter, forced to lean on a cane, trembling in every limb, she was filled with utter disgust.

Then the Teacher caused disease to overmaster the woman. Casting away her cane and her palm-leaf fan, she screamed aloud, fell upon the ground, and rolled over and over, wallowing in her own urine and excrement. Rupananda looked at her and was filled with utter disgust. Then the Teacher showed the death of the woman. Straightway her body began to bloat. From its nine wound-like openings oozed pus in the shape of lamp-wicks, and also worms. Crows and dogs fell on her and tore her. Rupananda looked and thought, 'In this very place this woman

has come to old age, has come to disease, has come to death. Even so, to this body of mine, will come old age, disease, and death." Thus did she come to behold her own body in its impermanence ; and as a result of beholding her own body in its impermanence, she likewise saw her body as involved in suffering, and the unreality thereof.

Straightway the Three Modes of Existence, like houses set on fire, or like carrion tied to her neck, uprose before her, and her mind sprang forth to meditation. The Teacher, perceiving that she had beheld her own body in its impermanence, considered within himself, "Will she, or will she not, by herself be able to get a firm footing ?" Straight-way he became aware of the following, "She will not be able ; she must have support from without." Accordingly out of consideration for her welfare, he taught her the Law by pronouncing the following stanzas :

Behold, Nanda, this assemblage of elements called the body ;
It is diseased, impure, putrid ; it oozes and leaks ;
yet it is desired of simpletons.
As is this body, so also was that ; as is that body,
so also will this body be.
Behold the elements in their emptiness ; go not
back to the world ;
Cast away desire for existence and thou shalt walk in tranquillity.

6

There was nothing new in all this. Passions had to be contended against earlier too; and ever since the dawn of civilization we have record of man's great deilmma over this mixed blessing, woman. But the Buddh's onslaught against these was both in its quality and magnitude, unparalleled. Himself a model of models, his example added weight to his words which themselves were no ordinary words, but presented the quintessence of the *sadhna,* realisation, of as perfect a being as a mortal can be. What is more, the Buddh lived on to a ripe old age, so that for nearly forty-five years he was personally looking after the spread of the Law. During this long period, he was constantly pointing out how from lust one runs to distress, how being attached and devoted to sensual pleasures, and infatuated by desire and blind with delusion, men would people the cemetery again and again. What was needed therefore was vivifying in our minds the wish for enlightenment, to aspire to and attain *nirvan,* non-being. The Jain tenets, similar in several respects to the preachings of the Buddh, insisted likewise that pleasures of the senses must be avoided. Sex and woman, both symbols of the keenest of sensual pleasures, were regarded as arch temptations. The *Sutras* enjoined upon the votary to vow :

"I renounce all sexual pleasures, either with gods or men or animals. I shall not give way to sensuality, nor cause others to do it, nor consent to it. As long as I live, I confess and blame, repent and exempt myself of these sins, in the thrice threefold way, in mind and speech and body."

The five clauses of this great vow forbade the Jain (Nirgranth) any discussion of topics relating to women. In addition, he was not to regard and contemplate the lovely forms of women, nor recall to his mind the pleasures and amusements he formerly had with women; nor occupy a bed or couch affected by women. If a Nirgranth did so, he might fall from the law, because of the destruction or disturbance of his peace.

All this engendered a fear, if not of life itself, certainly of all that seemed pleasurable, of all things sensual, of Body, Woman, Desire and Passions. Even the *Geeta,* the Gospal of the Lord, Shri Krishn, condemned Desire and likened the passions unto wild horses.

Arjun asked: "My Lord ! Tell me, what is it that drives a man to sin, even against his will and as if by compulsion ?"

Lord Shri Krishn said : "It is desire, it is aversion, born of passion. Desire consumes and corrupts everything. It is man's greatest enemy.

"As fire is shrouded in smoke, a mirror by dust, and a child by the womb, so is the universe enveloped in desire.

"It is wise man's constant enemy; it tarnishes the face of wisdom. It is as insatiable as a flame of fire.

"It works through the senses, the mind and the reason; and with their help destroys wisdom and confounds the soul.

"Therefore, O Arjuna ! first control thy senses, and then slay desire; for it is full of sin, and is the destroyer of knowledge and of wisdom.

"For the delights born of touch, having beginning and end, are, in truth, of pain, O son of Kunti, the enlightened man has no joy in them."

It created a distinction between the delights of the senses and the "bliss which sense, and which only the pure intellect can grasp", so that one ought to "renounce every desire which imagination can conceive, and control the senses at every point by the power of mind." It stressed, in short, the practice, or re-stressed the ancient path, of *yog* against *bhog* ! Whether, at its worst, as low sensuality, or, at its best, as being, existing, and experiencing existence, *bhog,* the way of pleasure was equally abhorrent. It was to be decried, even in the "high places", even in the "honeyed stage" where they seek to tempt thus: "Sir, will you sit here ? This pleasure might prove attractive. This heavenly maiden might prove attractive. This elixir keeps off old age and death...Yonder stand the wishing Trees, which grant the fruits of all desire, and the stream of Heaven, which confers blessedness. These nymphs are incomparable and not prudish. Eyes and ears here become supernal; the body becomes like a diamond..."No, even to such an offer, of staying in a place "high, unfading, ageless, deathless

and dear to gods", the yogi must say "no" and ponder upon the defects of pleasure : "broiled on the horrible coils of the round of rebirths and writhing in the darkness of birth and death, I have only this minute found the lamp of yoga, which makes an end of the obstruction of hindrances, the impairments *(klesha)*. The lust-born gusts of sensual things are the enemies of this lamp. How then may it be that I, who have seen its light, should be led astray by these phenomena of sense—this mere mirage—and make fuel of myself for that same old fire again of the round of rebirths, as it flares anew ? Fare ye well, O ye sensual things, deceitful as dreams, and to be desired only by the vile."

7

Whenever there is decline of *dharm,* proclaims Krishn, He incarnates Himself to redress the situation. This once He came along, so the Hindus believe, as the Buddh. It is customary to call him the Wise and the Enlightened; possibly he was all that. But considering that what he preached, or sought to, has in practice failed to serve as a lasting formula for man's living; that the land of his birth soon repudiated the Faith he is associated with; and that what endured was not what the Master had propounded, but was, in fact, almost the opposite of his doctrine, it would appear that there is more rhetoric to the Buddh's thinking than understanding of the basic human situation. Renounce the body, renounce woman, renounce sex and procreation, renounce eating and drinking and singing and dancing and all pleasure and merriment—renounce life itself : excellent remedies for the ills he set out to cure. No life, no problems; all peace. How simple and wise indeed ! If men had gone on following that path, the moon would not be in our grasp today.

In any case Nature was not going to shut up her workshop. And she continued to see to it that these 'cities of bones' our bodies, especially, the female bodies, had fine flesh covering them, and life and lustre, and a strangely potent pull. Very soon a reaction set in. Entering as nuns, the female members of the Order were found to be but women, and the narrow way was speedily converted into a broader one, akin almost to the primrose path, not of dalliance, but of salvation through dalliance ! Either as cause or consequence of this shift in the view, or as both, the elaborate philosophy and the complex thought of the Mahayan branch of the Faith came out with an extremely reoriented concept of woman, as of many other matters. New goddesses were created as Shaktis of the Buddhist, like those of the Hindu, pantheon. Sex and sexual union were re-evaluated and elevated into a road of release and became a part of the Tantric ritual. On the one hand, legends were fabricated which made the Bodhisatvs and the Buddh taste of the pleasures of love; and, on the other, art, which in the

earlier phase had shied at representing the Buddh anthropomorphically, began to portray and mould the infinite loveliness of the human form, both male and female. In the realm of the body beautiful of the woman, sculptures at Bharhut and Sanchi, and, more than that, at Mathura and Amravati and the paintings at Ajanta, reinstated the female of the species in her rightful place in the universe of man. As has been pointed out earlier, by the time the artists at Ajanta came to handle this perennial theme, woman as the goddess of beauty and happiness had come back with full honours. To quote yet once again from the great tribute paid by W. Gladstone Solomon, "I can think of no parallel to this frank and chivalrous woman-worship of Ajanta. Nowhere else perhaps has woman received such prefect and ungrudging homage. Even the beggar girl who asks for alms in the panel over the portal of the Seventeenth Cave is beautiful. The truth is they could not conceive of woman otherwise. As she truly inspired them so they gave back to her in kind these graphic gifts of a wholehearted admiration. In spite of her obvious reality one feels at Ajanta that woman is treated not merely as an individual, but as a principle. She is there not as female merely, but the incarnation of all the beauty of the world." In the meantime, ever since the Gupta period, Hinduism had been staging its re-assertion in the land. One of the weapons it had used was to substitute the Puranic pantheon for the Vedic, and to introduce worship of the idol for sacrifice to the fire.

In the fashioning of his gods and the modelling of their graces, the Hindu sculptor soon began to outvie the Buddhist, and at Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal, at Mahabalipuram and Ellora, and elsewhere, the Hindu artist succeeded in creating forms of beauty and norms of art which were models as well as inspiration for the generations that followed. And since all art is, or tends to be, one, the tradition that was bequeathed to the Chandel artist was the rich and rare combination of both the Buddhist and the Hindu achievements in the field and the very quintessence of all that was exquisite and excellent in them. So far as woman was concerned, both Buddhism and Hinduism had vastly upgraded her position, and both now conceived her not only as the incarnation of all the beauty of the world, but also as the incarnation of all the power of the world. As Shakti, she is the manifest world, the seed and source of all the moving and motionless things, is *Prakriti*, the Pure Mirror, in which the *Purush*, the Brahman, contemplates Himself, is the ever-changing *Maya* of the Changeless, is Relative Becoming of the Absolute Being. The Tantric Cult, especially, subscribed to this approach, and the Mother-goddess concept of woman became a major tone in the total colour which has obtained ever since. Woman was again on the pedestal, and regarded purer than ever. The wheel had come full circle, nay more. "Woman is pure in all her limbs, the cow is pure only behind"; or, "Woman, water and pearls are never spoiled"—thus in earlier thought. Even then she was regarded as the *sansarhetu*, the cause of the universe. But the purity and power associated with her now were of a far higher order, and the view which regarded her as

the woe of man, as the sum and essence and root of all evil, was never again to be as strongly held as it was in the pre-Shakt period.

What is more, the goddess, albeit mother, was regarded as an incarnation, no less, of youth and beauty and charm. The power of beauty is acknowledged even by the beasts, and there was no reason why the very incarnation of power should have been lacking in this fine ingrediant. Thus for the Shakt, the Great Mother is the, " 'unsullied treasure-house of beauty', the sapphire Devi whose slender waist, bending beneath the burden of the ripe fruit of her breasts, swells into jewelled hips heavy with the promise of infinite maternities. Her litanies depict Her physical form from head to foot, celebrating Her hair adorned with flowers and crowned with gems; Her brow bright as the eighth-day moon; Her ruby cheeks and coral lips; teeth like to 'the buds of the sixteen-syllabled *mantra*', and eyebrows curved as are the arches at the gate of the palace of Kamaraja; Her nose; Her teeth; Her chin; Her arms; and 'Her twin breasts offered in return for that priceless gem which is the love of Kameshvara'; Her waist girdled with jewelled bells; Her smooth and faultless limbs rounded beneath the jewelled disc of the knee like the sapphire-studded quiver of the God of Love, descending in lines of grace to Her bright lotus feet, which dispel the darkness of Her worshippers. For moonlight is She, yet sunbeam, soothing all those who are burnt by the triple fires of misery." And so, as Lakshmi or Saraswati, as Tara or Triputa, Ganga and Yamuna, or in Her several forms as Shiv's consort, the Goddess became a familiar theme for the sculptor who lavished, even as the poet had done, all his care and craft in evolving an ideal of female beauty which was not sensual but was yet alluring in the extreme, which combined the physical and the spiritual, the human and the divine, clay and spirit, into one grand, harmonious whole.

8

Thus it came about that by the time the sculptors of Khajuraho were called upon to carve the delightful forms of female beauty which adorn the temples of the place, there were clear-cut conventions to hand about the *apsaras* and the *apsara*-like women, as well as regarding the divinities. On the one hand, there was the young woman with breasts "like a pair of golden gourds" and "hips like the swell of a river bank", the voluptous female with "the swelling bosoms, rounded hips and clinging serpentine grace of the limbs, typical of the Indian feminine ideal"; and on the other, the female representation of divine beauty, expressing the highest Indian ideal in sculptured goddesses.

Of course, the ideal type of the beautiful woman was developed in sculpture centuries after literature had portrayed it in ceaseless detail. The epics, the

Ramayan and the *Mahabharat*, had furnished example after example of womanly beauty, both mortal and divine. The stock cases, include, of course, the mortal heroines and the *apsaras*. With the lack of inhibition so typical of these works, Ravan had spoken to Sita thus: "Of the right size, pointed, smooth, and white are thy teeth; thine eyes are wide and great, unblemished, and with red corners, and black pupils; thy thighs are as elephant's trunks; thy two breasts have a fair, firm-swelling, with lifted nipples, graceful, smooth, and like unto wine-palm fruits." Again, in the same epic, and still more eloquently, when he sees the *apsara* Rambha: "Just at this time, Ravana saw the most splendid of all Apsarases, Rambha with the full-moon face, decked with heavenly ornament, he saw her going along...with heaven's sandalwood her limbs were annointed, her hair was decked with mandara-flowers, with heaven's flowers, was Rambha adorned—a festival of heaven. With her moist-beauty-marks, laid on (forehead and cheeks) with the juice of flowers from the six seasons of the year, she shone, like another goddess of happiness and beauty, in loveliness, splendour, brightness and glory. All wrapped she was in a dark garment, like the water-laden cloud, her face like unto the moon, her glorious brows like two bows of the bowman, her thighs like elephant's trunks, her hands tender as young shoots. Ravana rose, under the spell of love's arrows, took her by the hand as she walked, and spoke to the shy one, as she smiled: "Wither away, thou with the lovely hips? What happiness art thou seeking of thine own accord? For whom is the sun now rising under which he will enjoy thee? Who will take his fill of the lotus-scented sap of thy mouth, tasting like nectar? To whose breast will these swelling, shining, close-set breasts of thine, like unto golden goblets, grant their touch?

The *Mahabharat* not only carries this tradition forward, but provides many more, and far more elaborate, pen-portraits of celestial and terrestrial females. Here is a description of the celebrated *apsara*, Urvashi, the same who became once the beloved of a mortal, King Pururavas. She had been fired with a hot love for Arjun, who was on a visit to Indr's heaven, and bathing and adorning herself, "when the moon had risen and early night had come, the broad-hipped one went forth and sought out the house of Pritha's son. Shining in her soft, curly, long hair wherein she wore many jasmine flowers, the heart-breaker went her way. With the moon of her countenance, and the delight of the movements of its brows, and the sweetness of the words tripping from her mouth, with her charm and her soft loveliness, she seemed to be challenging the moon as she walked along. As she went along, her breasts scented with a heavenly salve, black-nippled, rubbed with heaven's sandal-wood, and shining from her necklace, were shaken up and down. Through the upborne burden of her breasts, and the sharp movements of them she was bowed down at every step, she with the surpassing splendour of the centre of her body, gloriously girdled around by the three folds. Her feet, in which the ankles were deep imbedded, and whose toes

made red and long-stretched expanses, glittered, being hung with small bells and arched like the turtle's back. Her appearance was made still more captivating by her having partaken of heady drink, and by her contented joy by the love within her, and by her various sweet wiles. With Siddhas, Charanas, and Gandharvas, the coquettish beauty went along, even in heaven, of a truth, where there are many wonders, a figure right worthy of remark, with her thinnest of upper garments that shimmered with the colours of the clouds, and like unto the slender sickle of the moon in the sky, as it rides along, wrapped in clouds."

And like her, right worthy of remark on earth, is Draupadi, that great lady of the same epic. Indeed, she is one of the most celebrated models of womanly beauty in ancient India. She has all the marks of beauty which were to form the essential of the feminine ideal: "Three things in her are deep (voice, understanding and navel), six high-arched (nose, eyes, ears, nails, breasts, the joint of the neck), five red (the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, the corners of the eyes, the tongue, the nails)." Glowing with loveliness, exuding a scent as of the blue lotus which could be smelt from a *krosha's* distance, "she is of course without compare on earth for beauty, like a maiden of the gods, like a wonderful apparition". Whoever sees her folds his hands in reverence for such beauty cannot but receive instant recognition, will dazzle even those who are themselves beautiful and used to seeing the beautiful. That is why, when she came in disguise to Sudeshna, the wife of king Virat, and offered herself as a servant, the Queen doubted whether so much beauty was compatible with her professed occupation and said: "You might indeed be the mistress of servants, both male and female. Your heels are not prominent, and your thighs touch each other. You have great intelligence, your naval is deep, and your words are well-chosen. And your great-toes, bosoms and hips and torso and toe-nails and palms of your hands and the soles of your feet and your face are ruddy. And your speech is sweet, even as the voice of a swan. And your hair is beautiful, your bosoms shapely, and you are possessed of the highest grace; and like a Kashmirean mase, you are furnished with every auspicious mark. Your eye-lashes are beautifully bent, your lip is like the ruddy guard. Your waist is slender, and the lines of your neck are like those upon a conchshell. And your veins are scarcely visible. Indeed, your countenance is like the full moon, your eyes resemble the petals of the autumnal lotus, and your body is fragrant like the lotus itself. Surely in beauty you resemble Sri herself, whose seat is the autumnal lotus. Tell me beautiful damsel, who thou art! Thou canst never be a maidservant. Art thou a Yakshi, a goddess, a Gandharvi, or an Apsara? Art thou the daughter of a celestial, or art thou a Nagini? Art thou the guardian goddesss of some city, a Vidyadhara, or Kinnari, or art thou Rohini herself?...For the man thou lookest on there is no more weakness, no more pain, no more weariness, no discomfiture, no sorrow, and no torment. Sickness

and old age, hunger and thirst, for him are done with to whom thou gives thyself in love. Were such a one even dead, and didst thou clasp him with thy lovely arms, then would he come back again to life." Indeed, she is so beautiful that "even the women gaze only at her; the trees seem to stand bowing before her; no man can see her without being held by love". Naturally, Kichak, the villainous brother of the queen, longs for her and says to her: "Who in the whole world must not fall under the sway of love, when he beholds the glorious moon of thy countenance, endowed with peerless splendour, along with the moonbeams of the smile in thine eyes and lashes, and decked with heaven's beams, ravishing by its heavenly sweetness? Thy two so glorious breasts, fit for a string of pearls, these well-shaped, splendid, plump, rounded breasts, set close to one another with no gap between, like unto lotus-buds, O thou with the lovely brows, thou with the sweet smile, goad me like the love god's own goads. So soon as I see that waist of thine, sweetly ringed by folds, bent by the breast's weight, and within the compass of the fingers, O thou slim one, and thy lovely secret parts, rising like a river-island, I am carried away by a love-sickness beyond cure."

There are countless descriptions of this kind sprinkled all over the Indian literary tradition. In addition, literature—poetry, drama, *Purans*, and the *Ras-shastrs*—contains lists and inventories galore of the charms of lovely women and the marks of beauty. Differing here and there in some detail or item, these were broadly the same and helped evolve the norms and ideals which held good across the ages. Therefore just as the sculptor, guided by the descriptions of the deity given in the *Shastrs*, was ultimately required to produce the image from *dhyan*, concentrated imagination, so in the case of these sculptures of the female species there were, so to speak, detailed canonical texts. He was conversant with legends and myths and theories and concepts, and having had proper training understood how to wield the chisel in this matter as well as in respect of other themes. He knew the difference between the spiritual beauty of a goddess like Parvati, and the sensual attraction of an *apsara*, or between the innocent loveliness of a young damsel, chaste and as yet untasted, and the coquetry of an accomplished courtesan.

Possessing the keener sensibility of the artistic mind, the sculptors must have had an instinctive understanding of the infinite shades and nuances which had gone, during thousands of years, into the development of the Indian ideal of, and attitude to woman. Since we inherit the racial consciousness, the long and complicated history of the rise and fall and resurgence of the female in Indian society, all the pros and cons of her nectar-poison charm, should have come to the sculptors of Khajuraho as a simple formula, even as they come to the modern Indian.

9

Both the ideals and the conventions were, then, at hand for the artists of Khajuraho to set to work. Apart from the strictly technical conventions as to the shape of the eye and the length of the ear, two other matters concerning the carving of the female deserve notice. The first is the convention about the nude or the semi-nude. This need not detain us beyond saying that the representation of the female in the nude or the near-nude should not be taken as the prevailing fashion and mode of dress and apparel; and that beauty in the nude can conceal nothing, nor use padding or other artifice.

The second relates to the fact that only the youthful grace the walls of the temples. Varied are the poses and many the moods of the chiselled beauties, but there is one thing common to them all : they are all young. Goddess, *apsara* or woman—they all glow with the glory of youth; their beauty and form are youth-infused and youth-brightened. In the case of the goddesses and the *apsaras* this is understandable : for, being divine, they enjoy youth everlasting. But the human females ? For one thing, Indian art has kept to the joyous and the beautiful throughout, to the songs and smiles of existence, and usually ignored the grievous and the ugly. But apart from that, religion recognised that young damsels were auspicious : They turn the evil eye, and in them dwells Shri, the goddess of wealth and beauty. If these sculptured women are the *devdasis* dedicated to the service of the deity, surely it stands to reason that they had to be the pick of the basket. One does not offer to the deity flowers that are faded and withered, but those which are, in bloom and perfume, the very finest. Since motherhood is the fairest calling of the woman and since Nature decks her to perfection for this supreme function in the years of her youth, the ideal representation came to be associated with the young and just-matured damsel, when she tastes like "the god-like draught of immortality", holds forth the promise of supreme pleasure, and is pleasant to look at however she may stand; when there is music in every movement she makes, and art in all her gestures ! After all Nature has to keep in view all the Buddhs and the would-be-Buddhs, all the monks and the misogynists who would care not a rap if the work of the world came to a stop. Indeed, one modern misogynist, seeing through this clever ruse of Dame Nature, puts the matter squarely :

"With young girls Nature seems to have had in view what, in the language of the drama, is called *a coup de theatre*. For a few years she dowers them with a wealth of beauty and is lavish in her gift of charm, at the expense of the rest of their life, in order that during those years they may capture the fantasy of some man to such a degree that he is hurried into undertaking the honourable care of them, in some form or other, as long as they live—a step for which

there would not appear to be any sufficient warranty if reason only directed his thoughts. Accordingly Nature has equipped women, as she does all her creatures, with the weapons and implements requisite for the safeguarding of her existence and for just as long as it is necessary for her to have them. Here, as elsewhere, Nature proceeds with her usual economy; for just as the female ant, after fecundation, loses her wings, which are then superfluous, nay, actually a danger to the business of breeding; so, after giving birth to one or two children, a woman generally loses her beauty; probably, indeed, for similar reasons.

"And so we find that young girls, in their hearts, look upon domestic affairs or work of any kind as of secondary importance, if not actually as a mere jest. The only business that really claims their earnest attention is love, making conquests, and everything concerned with this—dress, dancing and so on."

That is it. That is what seems to be the concern of all these young girls who sport so superbly on the facades of Khajuraho temples, making conquest. Whether they be looking into a mirror, or painting their feet, adjusting a tress or removing a thorn, throwing the ball or touching their breast, putting vermilion in the parting of their hair or applying collyrium, tying the *ghungroos* or merely yawning —they seem to have but one business: to be beautiful and seductive. The artist has caught them at their freshest, in the springtime of their being, when every woman is an *apsara*, while the wine of youth filleth the chalice of the body, for soon the dazzling form will become a bundle of bones and will look disagreeable with it sagging skin. Touched by the wand of art, the moment has become eternity and we see them still as young and warm and beautiful as when the sculptor chiselled them.

10

So much for youth. In respect of beauty which is considered among God's best gifts, three points should be noted. In the first place, distinction is made between sensual and spiritual beauty, between the physical beauty of form, which is temporary and transient, and the eternal and everlasting Beauty whose reflection all beautiful forms are. With regard to this latter idea, there is general agreement in all faiths and philosophies, the difference being only as to whether the original is He or She, God or Goddess. Says Jami:

"His Beauty everywhere doth show itself
And through the forms of earthly beauties shines
Obscured through a veil."

In the case of the Shakt, it is the goddess who is the fountain and essence of beauty and who incarnates herself in all beautiful forms, specially those of youthful virgins. Thus the eternal, the *nitya*, is re-created as *lila*, the play, in

this world. Since we cannot see divine beauty with human vision, not until God or the Goddess gives us the vision divine may we know Reality, including the Reality of Beauty.

Secondly, we should note that although male beauty has its own high place—and Indian sculpture certainly gives many wondrous examples of the ideals of male beauty; and Krishn of Hindu mythology is regarded as the supreme treasure of quintessential beauty—'bodily beauty is deem'd a feminine attribute'. In fact, most of us tend to agree with Haydon who says that the beautiful has its origin altogether in women. This is because of two great and contrary movements. Woman was first made into a 'secret' and a 'sin' and so she became 'alluring and exciting'. Then, the opposite attitude developed so that in the East all women became the earthly representatives of the Devi and, in the West, of the Virgin. It is generally true that woman has been the major theme of man's writings and, so far as art is concerned, 'both its subject and its goal'. Anyway, our aesthetic values have tended to revolve round woman and woman's beauty, rather than around the male and his handsomeness.

Finally, we may think of beauty as a mode of man's worship and a way for his salvation. With Truth and Goodness, Beauty is one of the eternal verities, and as such both through Art and through Love which Beauty inspires, we may reach the goal of *mukti*. Science and Religion, which represent Truth and Goodness, are two other means to the same end. In fact, for the Indian artists, his work meant as much of 'sadhna', realization, as for the so-called ascetic. In art too, the human soul is seeking the divine so that, as Romain Rolland says, 'it is not astonishing that many great Indian artists who have passed through this discipline, finally became saints'. That is why, too, the work of our great poets and artists is generally such an exquisite combination of the sensual and the spiritual. Although the fusion of these two, of *Bhog* and *Tyag* (Enjoyment and Renunciation), was brought about in the story of Indian religion by many different causes, one way of explaining the work of the Chandel sculptors is to relate it to the Indian concept of Beauty.

The medieval concept of female beauty relies, in particular, on the cult of the Goddess. In its essentials this new cult was based on the idea of combining *nirvan* with *sansar, mukti* with *bhukti,* liberation with enjoyment. The Buddh had declared the first two as antithetic. The later sects of the Buddhists, the Mahayan and in that the Vajryan, and the Tantric Hindus and the Sahaj adherents presented an altogether new and grandiose concept of their compatibility, nay, of their oneness. The investing of the Buddh with his *shaktis* or the chief among the Hindu deities with theirs was a necessary adjunct—for the devotees will follow what the gods do; children will imitate the parents. Also, they rediscovered and codified in terms of expert knowledge and exposition the exceptionally high efficacy of the agitation of the blood and breath produced by the sexual act especially when we effect, through sexo-yogic practices and

control, proper utilisation of that state of near-churning of our total personality. On top of all this, they wove all these into one neatly tied, even if seemingly subtle and complex, system of thought where all these pieces of the puzzle fitted in most marvellously. The concrete and the abstract have never before commingled in such a superb set-up as they have been put together in Tantric thought. The *yab-yum* image, the *mithun,* the state of being a couple, was many things, and all at once—God and Goddess in embrace, the Adi-Buddh and his Shakti, or Shiv and Parvati, or Brahman and *Prakriti,* or *Parmatma*—the Divine Soul—and the *Jivatma*—human soul; the Male dormant aspect of the universe and the Female active and manifest as universe; the Formless and the Form. It was the moon and the sun together, or the right and the left; or *shunyata*—vacuum, but with a difference—which was the true state of the Universe, and *karuna*—mercy—which filled it, like the clouds fill a valley, but conceal the reality. Essentially, however, it was a symbol of conquest of the sense of duality and diversity of the world and faiths—and of asserting the intrinsic and all-pervading unity of things and the oneness—before and after the material, and, therefore, in the material—of that which was and is and remains forever. It is on this basic principle that the new Hindu concept of *mahanirvan* and *anand,* and the Buddhist concept of *nirvan* and *mahasukh* were founded and developed. *Bhog* became a way of *yog,* and, across the centuries, that which the Hindu ascetic and in turn the Buddh had disdained and denounced, and that which they had appointed as the desirable goal, these two met and found that the ground between them was common, was, in fact, itself an illusion.

With the Buddhist of those days himself trading a new ware, *Mahasukh,* the great delight, against the *Mahanirvan* which the Hindu aimed at, woman became the means and instrument of *sadhna,* nay, was regarded as the very source of all power, and the manifestation of the Highest who, Himself formless and changeless, is, so to speak, passive, while the Goddess, his Shakti, is the activising agent, and therefore Mistress of the living world. And woman is Her form. The Goddess incarnates herself in every female, so that to worship a woman is to worship the great Goddess herself. This oversimplified summary of the return to man's world of woman as goddess does not give a true idea of the elaborate Shakt philosophy, nor does it bring out fully the Mother-aspect of the Goddess. However, what is germane to our examination is the fact that through suitable and prescribed ritual, man could convert any woman into a goddess and worship the *devi* in her. Indeed, man should honour every woman, for *Striyo devah striyah pranah*—women are gods, women are life itself—thus an old hymn. According to the Tantr Shastr, a woman may not only receive *Mantr*, but may, as Guru, initiate and give it. She is worshipped both as wife of Guru and as Guru herself: "The Devi is Herself the Guru of Shastras and women, as indeed all females, Her embodiments, are in a peculiar sense, Her representatives. For this reason all women are worshipful..."

No wonder then that woman became once again an essential element composing our world, and no ritual or ceremony could be complete without her. As *mudra,* or for *maithun,* two of the five essentials of the *Panchtattv* rites of the Tantric, she was a necessity for the ceremonial of worship. And the temples of Khajuraho or others like them show her displaying her beautiful body in all aspects of her loveliness, and in postures of love—*mudra,* in another of the several senses of this term. And all is holy, for "women are worshipful."

The attitude to the body itself had undergone a great change. When the great reaction set in it took note of this vital item also, and due, even exaggerated, attention and importance were accorded to the body. Just as in the case of woman, or wine, or good eating, or of pleasure generally, the pendulum was allowed to swing to the other extreme, so in this case also, the earlier vileness was remedied by deifying the reviled. The body became holy, temple of the soul, residence of the gods, a place of pilgrimage. Once considered by them to be a source of sin and pain, now it was declared by the Buddhists as well as the Hindus as the "most reliable and effective instrument at men's disposal for conquering death," and "an aid to meditation and liberation." The summary of the new view and attitude is found in the words of Saraha : "Here (within this body) is the Ganges and the Jumna, here the 'Ganga sagara,' here are Prayag and Benares—here the sun and the moon. Here are the sacred places, here the *pithas* and the *upa-pithas*. I have not seen a place of pilgrimage and an abode of bliss like my body" and again, "He is within the house,—but you are enquiring about him outside". And, "Some one bodiless is hiding himself in the body—he who knows him there (in the body) is liberated." Of course, the body had to be purified, and made divine, and all that; and there was the gross body and the subtle, and so on. But for our purpose of understanding why there is such a splash of beauty and youth on the walls of Hindu temples of the medieval period including those of Khajuraho, it is enough to underscore the point that the physical was no longer disdained ; indeed, there was a new cult on : worship through the flesh and of the flesh ; and the soul was out to embrace the body.

With the return of woman, many other things returned. And above all, justifications came along for admitting to the Order of the Buddhists, and to the greater order and scheme of life from which these can never be excluded, that which symbols of the Tantric ritual stand for—food that produces energy and desire ; wine that intoxicates and, through temporary oblivion of the dull and the unpleasant, makes pursuit of pleasure possible ; and woman, the dance and light and joy of man's world. Banished from the bed, woman now got on to the temple, became goddess, worthy of worship ; the sexual act became an act of devotion, and an instrument of bliss.

11

This conversion of the sexual act into an instrument of salvation and bliss was the result of a great confluence of the river of instinct and primitive dogma and the two streams of Buddhist and Vedantic thought. The Buddhist philosophy of the *mahasukh* and the Sahajiya cult of Hindus, both based on the Vedantic doctrine of the essential non-duality of the universe, gave it a high spiritual and intellectual content which not only robbed the sexual act, for all time, of its sinfulness, but stamped it as the high-watermark of moral achievement and spiritual attainment. As the idea of *mahasukh* took shape and acquired a significance akin to that of *nirvan* itself, the sexual act, as means and instrument thereof, could not but assume the extraordinary importance the Buddhist *tantrs* give it. It became something sacred, and essential for salvation. Indeed, it was claimed that the Buddha himself "had set the example. *Mahacina-karma-caras,* also entitled *Cinacarasara-tantra,* tells how the sage Vasistha, son of Brahma, goes to find Visnu, under the aspect of the Buddha, to ask him about the rites of the goddess Tara. He enters the great country of China and sees the Buddha surrounded by a thousand mistresses in erotic ecstasy. The sage's surprise verges on indignation. 'These are practices contrary to the Vedas!' he cries. A voice from space corrects him: 'if', says the voice, 'thou wouldst gain my favour, it is with these practices in the Chinese fashion that thou must worship me!' He approaches the Buddha and receives from his lips this unexpected lesson: 'Women are the gods, women are life, women are adornment. Be ever among women in thought'."

Likewise, the Sahajiya cult, and the Hindu Tantric thought generally, modelled the philosophy of the love of women and *maithun* on the same dual symbolism of Union and Bliss, Union standing, of course, for Release.

Whenever there is a powerful conflict in respect of any matter, the usual solution which the ingenious human mind has suggested is a synthesis of the seemingly antithetic. Thus the problem of the cruel choice between *bhog* and *yog* was got over by evolving a philosophy of living, a way of thinking, wherein *bhog* itself became *yog*, enjoyment was made into a form of discipline. Likewise, the dilemma of man versus woman was resolved through conceiving these two as aspects of the same entity, by making one the manifestation of the other and through creating that superb image, the *ardhnarishwar*, half-man-half-woman, Shiv Androgynous. In the myth of Shiv and Parvati, and of Krishn and Radha, this great quarrel of all mankind ended, literally in lovers' meeting. Shiv, *yogi* and householder; Krishn, Lord of Kurkshetra and Lover of Vrindavan, the propounder of the *Gita*, as well as the philanderer making merry with the *gopis,*— these two provided the happy solution of the soul-sex riddle so far as it concerned the Hindu, confused as he was with Buddhist thought, and distracted by contrary

advice about the ways and values of life. Normal acceptance of the seasons of life, of its spring and lusty summer no less than the autumn and winter of age and decay, acceptance and fulfilment of the desire for loving as well as of the desire for leaving, for romance as well as renunciation—this became the path. Moderation in all things, in the things of the senses as well as of the spirit, came to be regarded as the golden rule in almost all religions. Finally, there was the great philosophy, of the *mahasukh*, great delight, which in one supreme effort of intellectual thought and spiritual vision, gave to the mind of man a new path of peace, through advocating action in detachment, killing without rancour, doing without desire, lusting without passion, using without a sense of ownership, committing follies without a sense of guilt, drinking without inhibition, indulging in all the sensual pleasures as if one were praying and chanting *mantrs*, and, above all converting woman into deity and equating the sexual act with a religious rite. Verily, among other hideous things, lust lay dead, and sin ceased to be ; and everything became godly and clean.

This was not a new development, but a restatement of an ancient truth, a resuscitation of old tenets. Sex was never vile ; it had always been worshipped. Woman was never a torment, no shadow of the Devil, but a creature of light and delight made for man's happiness and for life's fulfilment. And Kam was, in many faiths, among the first of gods if not the first god. As to the creation of woman, here is a Hindu myth which underscores the *raison d'etre* of this sublimity, stresses that she was conjured into being that she might be the radiance of our life and the joy of our existence :

"In the beginning this (world) was Self alone, in the shape of a person. He looking round saw nothing but his Self. He first said, 'This is I' ; therefore he became I by name. Therefore even now, if a man is asked, he first says, 'This is I', and then pronounces the other name which he may have. And because before (purva) all this, he, the Self, burnt down (ush) all evils, therefore he was a person (pur-usha). Verily he who knows this, burns down every one who tries to be before him.

"He feared, and therefore any one who is lonely fears. He thought, 'As there is nothing but myself, why should I fear ?' Thence his fear passed away. For what should he have feared ? Verily fear arises from a second only.

"But he felt no delight. Therefore a man who is lonely feels no delight. He wished for a second. He was so large as man and wife together. He then made this his Self to fall in two, and thence arose husband and wife...Therefore the void which was there is filled by the wife. He embraced her, and men were born".

Woman was created because the Self found no delight without this second. And she was created from within himself as a part which must for ever tend to the condition of union with the other half, with its source and fount, that they may both become one and whole. The union of man and woman therefore becomes the symbol of the union of *Purush* and *Prakriti*, of Creator and

Creation, of God and Soul, and is one of the most commonly employed metaphors in religious texts. "As a man in the embrace of his beloved wife forgets everything that is without, everything that is within ; so man, in the embrace of the knowing Self, forgets everything that is without, everything that is within ; for there all desires are satisfied, Self is sole desire." Later on when the concept of *Shakti* was developed, another strand of thought was added to the same idea, and the union of male and female became the symbol of the union of Shiv and Shakti, of God and His manifestation ; or of the Buddha and *Pragya*, wisdom, and so on and so forth. Secondly, the myth underscores the theological position that all is Self, so that all duality is illusion, all creation is a veil, and only he who understands this, and burns everything that tries to come before him, he who knows that it is all but the play of the "I" with the "I", mere sport of the *Purush*, Primal Person, is wise. It is this play, *'lila'*, which is sculpted all over the temples of Khajuraho with *her*, who was created for delight, as the centre of this universe.

12

Of the several explanations for the existence of beautiful female figures on the temple walls the simplest is that the sculptor was not thinking of any philosophy but merely following the architectural canons. He may have had the normal joy we all experience in creative activity ; and, in so far as he was carving beauty, and feminine beauty at that, he might have felt great delight in his work. But, essentially, he was carrying out the Shastric injunctions and merely conformed to conventions. It is wellknown that by the time the Khajuraho artists set to work, detailed and elaborate codes had been framed in respect of all matters concerning the temple's form and finish. Part of the instructions was that youthful damsels should be carved upon the temple-walls. And it was set down with equal clearness as to what types these women would be and in what postures and what moods they had to be carved. For instance, according to one manual there had to be the following sixteen moods and modes :—

With the hands (arms) arched, with fingers on chin, with fingers on lip, holding the branch of a tree, with one hand holding flower, the other on hair ; arranging hair, holding a mirror, hiding the front i.e. displaying the back ; dancing ; with a bird ; putting on or taking off anklets ; playing upon the *mridang ;* yawning ; mother and child ; with a fly-whirl ; playing among flowers. There are many more, obviously : the ritual of the toilet, playing with the ball, just being beautiful, to say nothing of the smiles and the kisses and the acts of love. Indeed, there is no end to the variations on this theme of the alluring wiles of all beautiful women, and of the *apsaras* of Khajuraho.

The art of each age reflects the social conditions of the period. From the sculptures of Khajuraho we gather a great deal of information about the costumes the mode of dressing, jewellery, hair styles and similar matters pertaining to the world of women. Throughout the ages, the Indian woman has, like woman everywhere, carefully tended her form and face, and shown a marked fondness for beauty-aids—perfumes and cosmetics—and toilet and jewellery. Several plates in this book show women applying collyrium to the eyes or lac to the feet, or braiding their hair. As to this last, the hair and the hair-styles generally, a whole book would not suffice to describe these. A Tamil Poet speaks of women with coiffeur in five different modes. In fact, the Indian woman has five times five modes of wearing and braiding her hair, and Khajuraho sculptures provide several amazingly rich specimens of these. The use of precious stones and garlands of pearls which was fairly common is evident all over. Jewellery was in great vogue and was worn both by men and women. In the case of the latter, ornaments were put in the hair, on the ears, upon the breasts and around the neck, the waist, the arms, the wrists and the ankles.

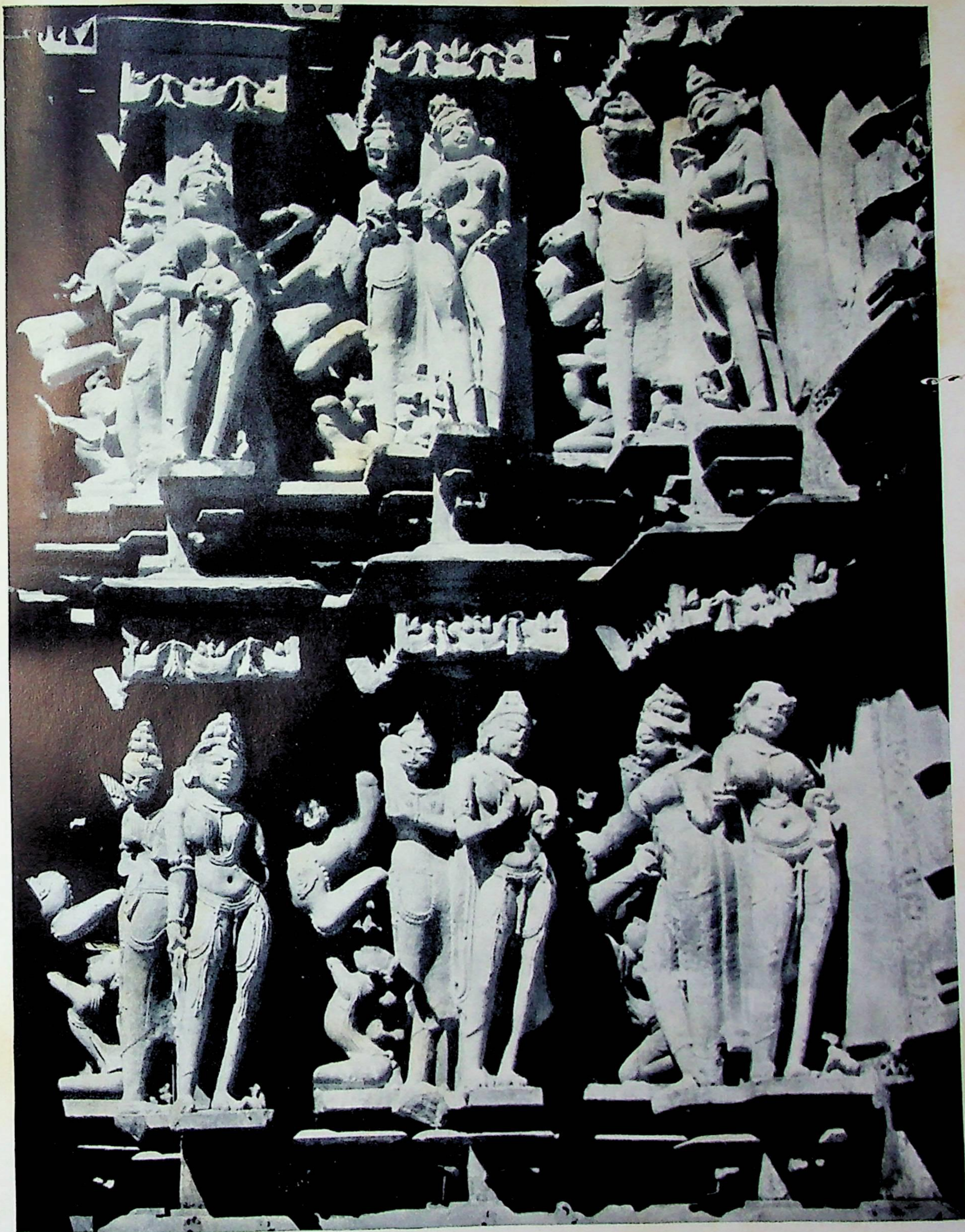
But these are mere details of decoration—provided so that women of later generations may imitate the graceful fashions of that age. What the *apsaras* of Khajuraho offer is more than this. They are models of feminine beauty, and of that radiance and joy in living and loving which cannot be produced by cosmetics and ornaments. These a woman may attain to only when she enjoys health and purity of body, mind and the soul, and strives to become truly a reflection of *Devi*, the Goddess.

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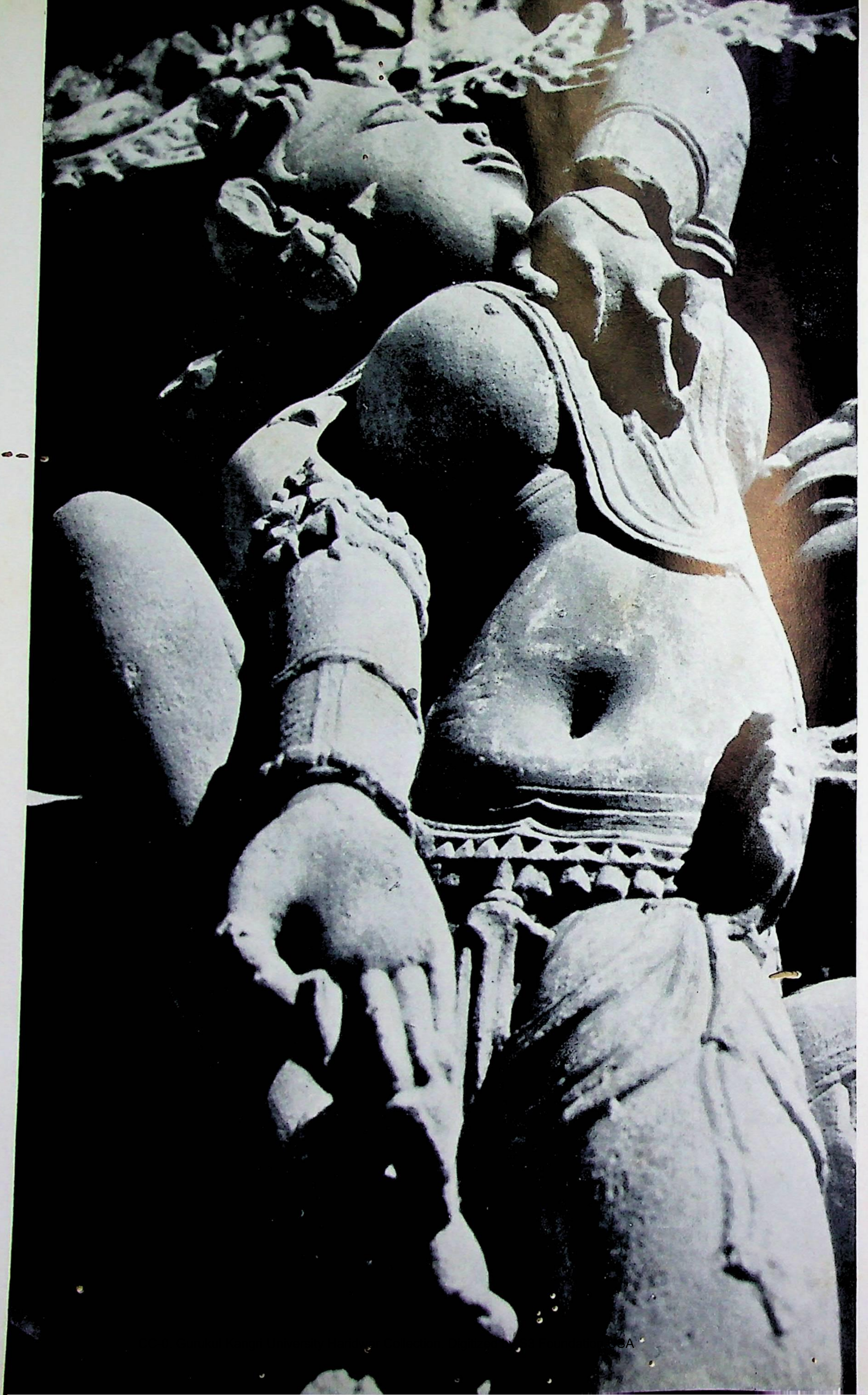
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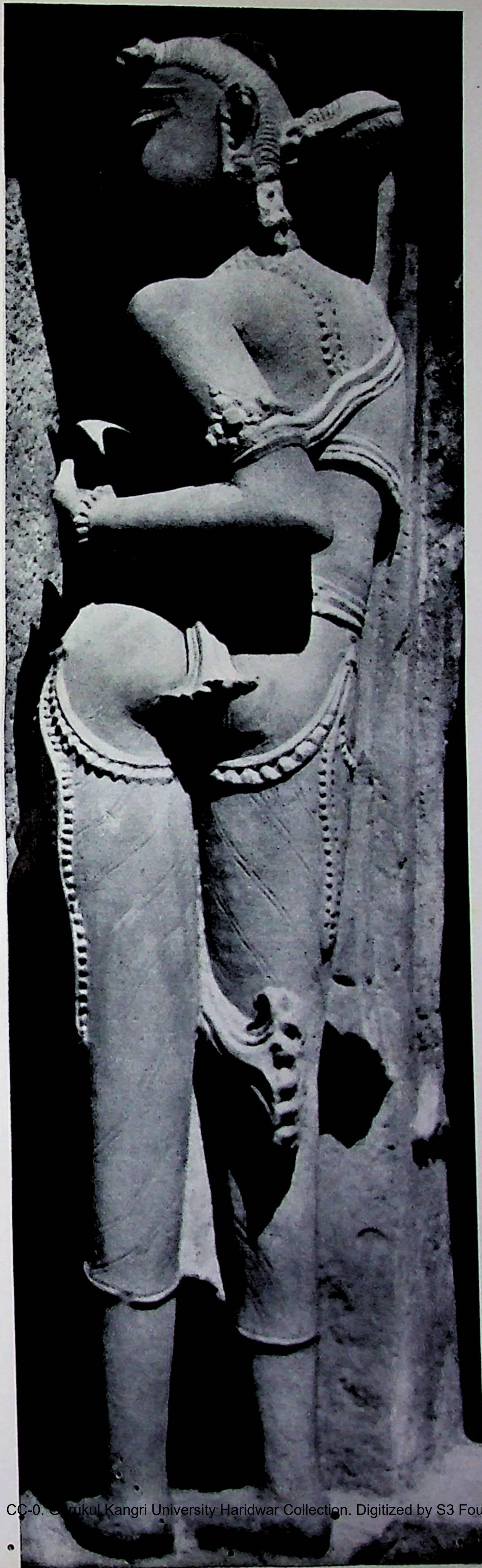




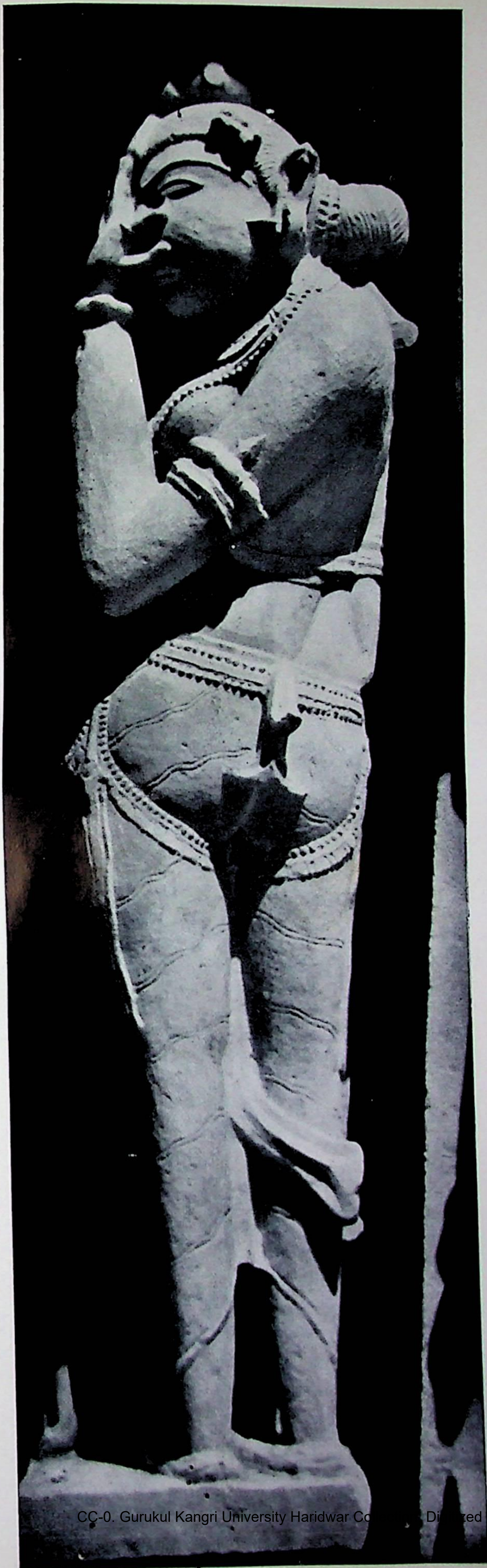
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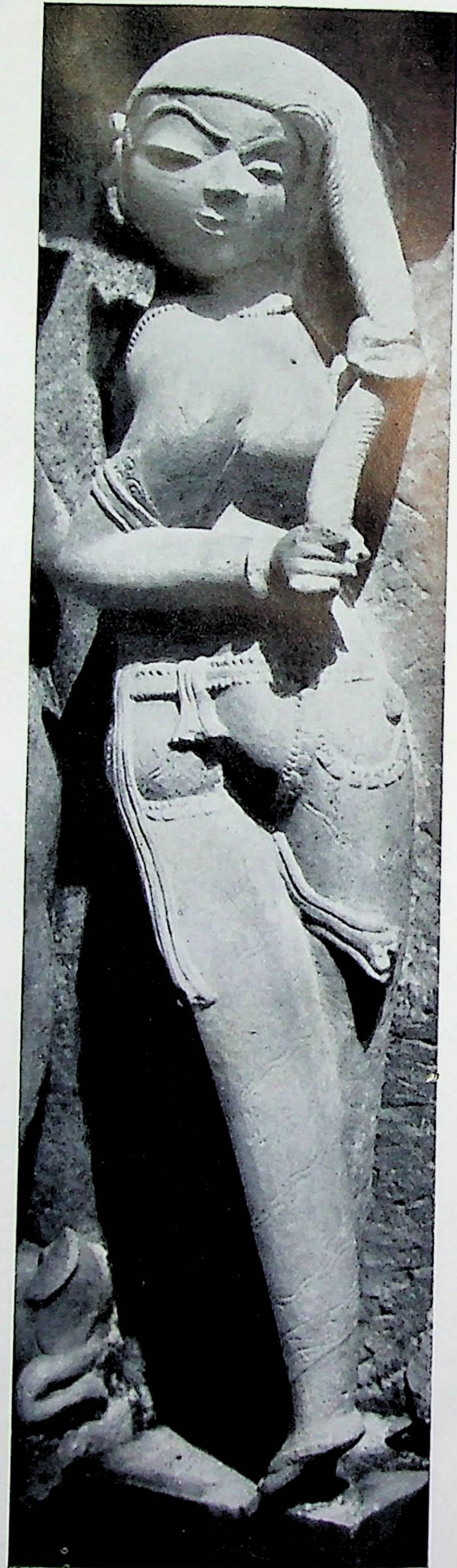








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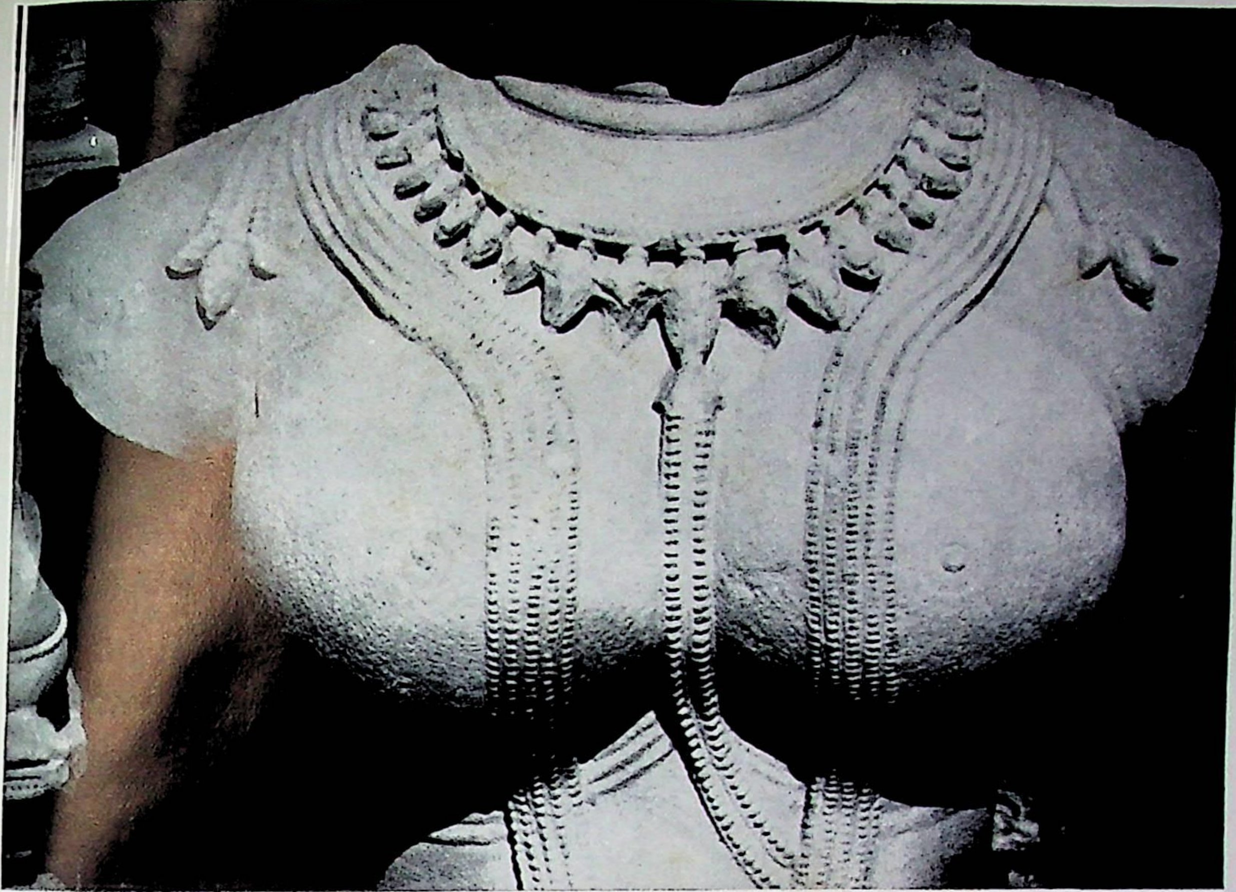
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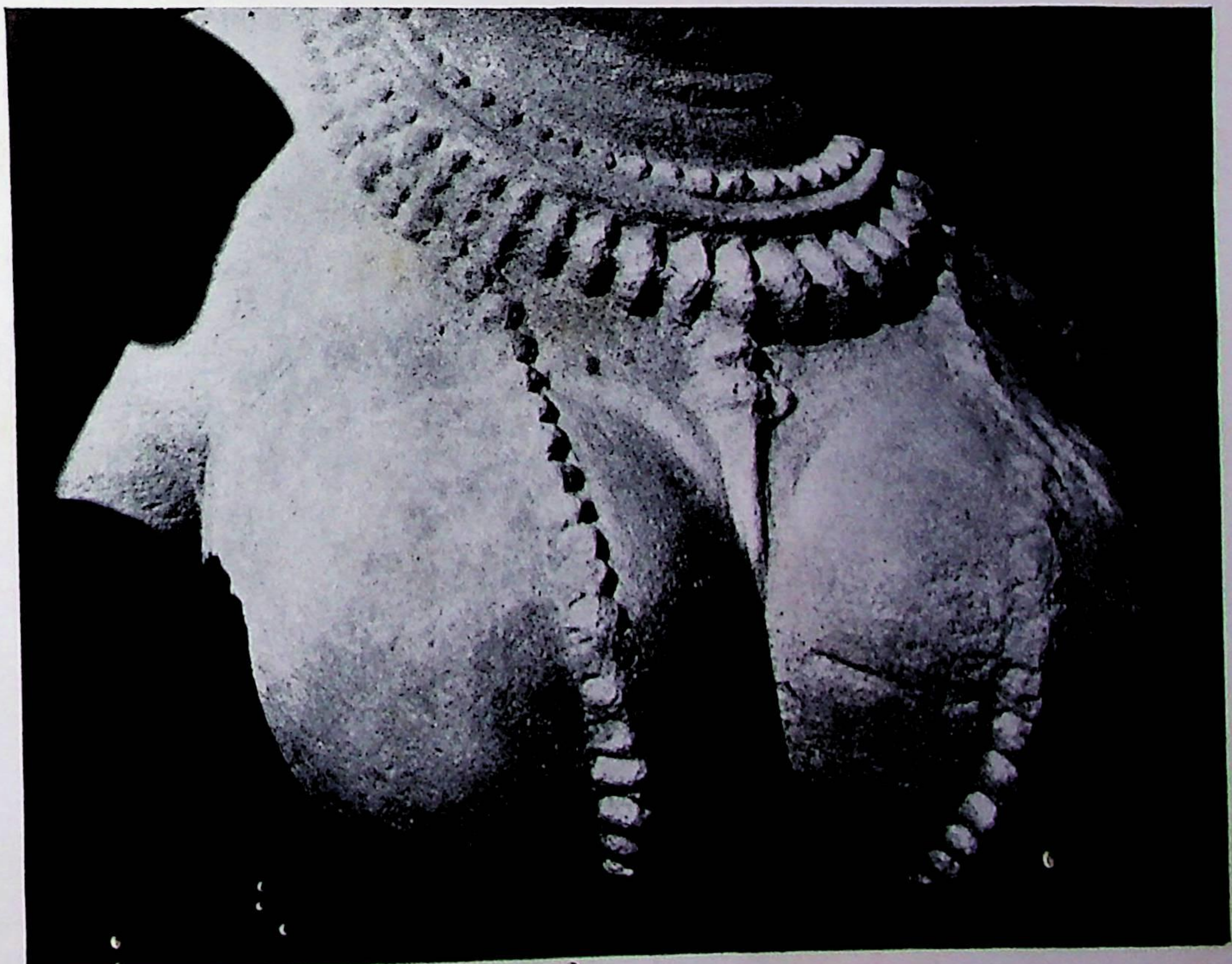
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